

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-17

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-09 H-02 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-14 USIA-12

AID-20 NIC-01 SY-07 OPR-02 RSR-01 /114 W

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R 302145 Z MAR 73

FM AMEMBASSY SANTO DOMINGO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7804

INFO USCINCSO FOR POLAD

CINCLANT FOR POLAD

C O N F I D E N T I A L SANTO DOMINGO 1426

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, DR

SUBJECT: GODR TO INVESTIGATE JOURNALIST'S DEATH

REF: SD 1403

1. RESPONDING SWIFTLY TO THE GROUNDSWELL OF PUBLIC DEMAND THAT THOSE GUILTY OF THE MARCH 28 MURDER OF PROMINENT JOURNALIST GREGORIO GARCIA CASTRO BE BROUGHT TO JUSTICE, PRESIDENT BALAGUER ISSUED ON MARCH 29 TWO DECREES, THE FIRST OF WHICH ESTABLISHED A SPECAIL INVESTIGATING COMMISSION COMPOSED OF MAJOR GENERAL NEIT NIVAR SEIJAS WHO WILL ACT AS CHAIRMAN, ATTORNEY GENERAL DR. JUAN ARISTIDES TAVERAS GUZMAN, AND POLICE CHIEF GENERAL JOSE RNESTO CRUZ BREA. THE COMMISSION WAS GIVEN AN EXECUTIVE MANDATE TO INVESTIGATE THE CRIME AND REPORT ITS FINDINGS DIRECTLY TO THE PRESIDENT. THE SECOND DECREE, RELATED TO THE FIRST, RELIEVED MAJOR SOCRATES ("CHINO") PICHARDO OF HIS ARMY RANK AND POSITION OF AIDE TO THE PRESIDENT UNTIL THE ASSASSINATION OF GARCIA CASTRO WAS "CLARIFIED" BY THE SPECIAL COMMISSION. THE LATTER DECREE INDICATED THAT THIS ACTION WAS BEING TAKEN IN RESPONSE TO BROADCASTS ON VARIOUS SANTO DOMINGO RADIO STATIONS LINKING PICHARDO TO THE MURDER. JOINING IN THE GROWING CHORUS OF PUBLIC DENUNICATIONS OF PICHARDO, THE NATIONAL UNION OF PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISTS ON MARCH 29 ISSUED A COMMUNIQUE ALSO CALLING FOR AN INVESTIGATION OF PICHARDO'S ALLEGED ROLE IN THE MURDER. (PICHARDO
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AND HIS BODYGUARDS WERE DETAINED LAST NIGHT, MARCH 29, AND HIS HOME REPORTEDLY SEARCHED BY POLICE UNITS. PICHARDO HIMSELF HAS PUBLICLY DENIED ANY INVOLVEMENT IN THE SLAYING.)

2. GARCIA CASTRO' S SOLEMN AND EMOTIONAL FUNERAL YESTERDAY, MARCH 29, WAS ATTENDED BY AN ESTIMATED 5,000 PEOPLE, INCLUDING REPRESENTATIVES OF THE GODR, ALL MAJOR POLITICAL PARTIES, AND THE MEDIA. ALTHOUGH THE FUNERAL TOOK PLACE WITHOUT MAJOR INCIDENT, LARGE NUMBERS OF APPARENTLY ORGANIZED SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS CHANTED ANTI- GOVERNMENT SLOGANS, BLAMING BALAGUER FOR GARCIA CASTRO' S DEATH.

3. COMMENT: THE BELIEF THAT PICHARDO WAS SOMEHOW INVOLVED IN THE ASSASSINATION IS APPARENTLY WIDELY HELD. GARCIA CASTRO HAD REPORTEDLY INFORMED A WIDE CIRCLE OF FRIENDS AND COLLEAGUES DURING THE PAST SEVERAL MONTHS OF HIS FEAR OF ASSASSINATION AT THE INVESTIGATION OF PICHARDO AND OTHERS LINKED TO HIM. IF HIS FEARS WERE JUSTIFIED AND PICHARDO WAS IN FACT INVOLVED, ALTHOUGH THIS IS NOT AT ALL CLEAR AT THIS TIME, BALAGUER IS PLACED IN A DIFFICULT POSITION BECAUSE OF HIS KNOWN PERSONAL TIES TO BOTH PICHARDO AND GARCIA CASTRO. THE SITUATION IS FURTHER COMPLICATED BY PICHARDO' S LINKS WITH GENERAL ENRIQUE PEREZ Y PEREZ, THE ARCHRIVAL OF GENERAL NIVAR. NIVAR HIMSELF HAS PUBLICLY ANNOUNCED HIS DETERMINATION TO GET TO THE BOTTOM OF THE CRIME, UNDOUBTEDLY DELIGHTING IN PICHARDO' S CURRENT PREDICAMENT WHICH PERMITS HIM (NIVAR) AN OPPORTUNITY TO STRIKE AN INDIRECT BLOW AT HIS BITTER ENEMY PEREZ Y PEREZ. INTERESTINGLY, BALAGUER HAS CAREFULLY BALANCED THE COMPOSITION OF THE INVESTIGATING COMMISSION BY APPOINTING GENERAL CRUZ BREA, A WELL- KNOWN PEREZ Y PEREZ ALLY.

4. ALTHOUGH THE PRESS IS ALREADY SPECULATING THAT THE RESULTS OF THIS INVESTIGATING COMMISSION WILL BE SIMILAR TO THOSE OF PREVIOUS SIMILAR ONES, THAT IS, NIL OR VIRTUALLY SO, NIVAR' S ACTIVE PARTICIPATION MAY CAUSE SOME SURPRISES IN THIS REGARD AS HE CAN BE EXPECTED DOGGEDLY TO PURSUE HIS OWN INTERESTS AT THE EXPENSE OF PICHARDO AND HIS ASSOCIATES. REGARDLESS OF WHO IS BEHIND THE ASSASSINATION, HOWEVER, UNTIL THE CRIME IS SOLVED, THE GODR' S IMAGE SEEMS LIKELY TO SUFFER AS A RESULT OF GARCIA CASTRO' S DEATH.

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*** Current Handling Restrictions *** n/a

*** Current Classification *** CONFIDENTIAL

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 30 MAR 1973
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: golinofr
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973SANTO01426
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: n/a
Film Number: n/a
From: SANTO DOMINGO
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19730344/aaaaiogi.tel
Line Count: 107
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: SD 1403
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: golinofr
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 30 JAN 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <30-Jan-2002 by collinp0>; APPROVED <14 FEB 2002 by golinofr>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: <DBA CORRECTED> srp 980115
Subject: GODR TO INVESTIGATE JOURNALIST' S DEATH
TAGS: PINS, DR
To: ARA
SECSTATE WASHDC INFO CINCLANT FOR POLAD
USCINSCO FOR POLAND
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005